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⑯ Improvements in household toasters.

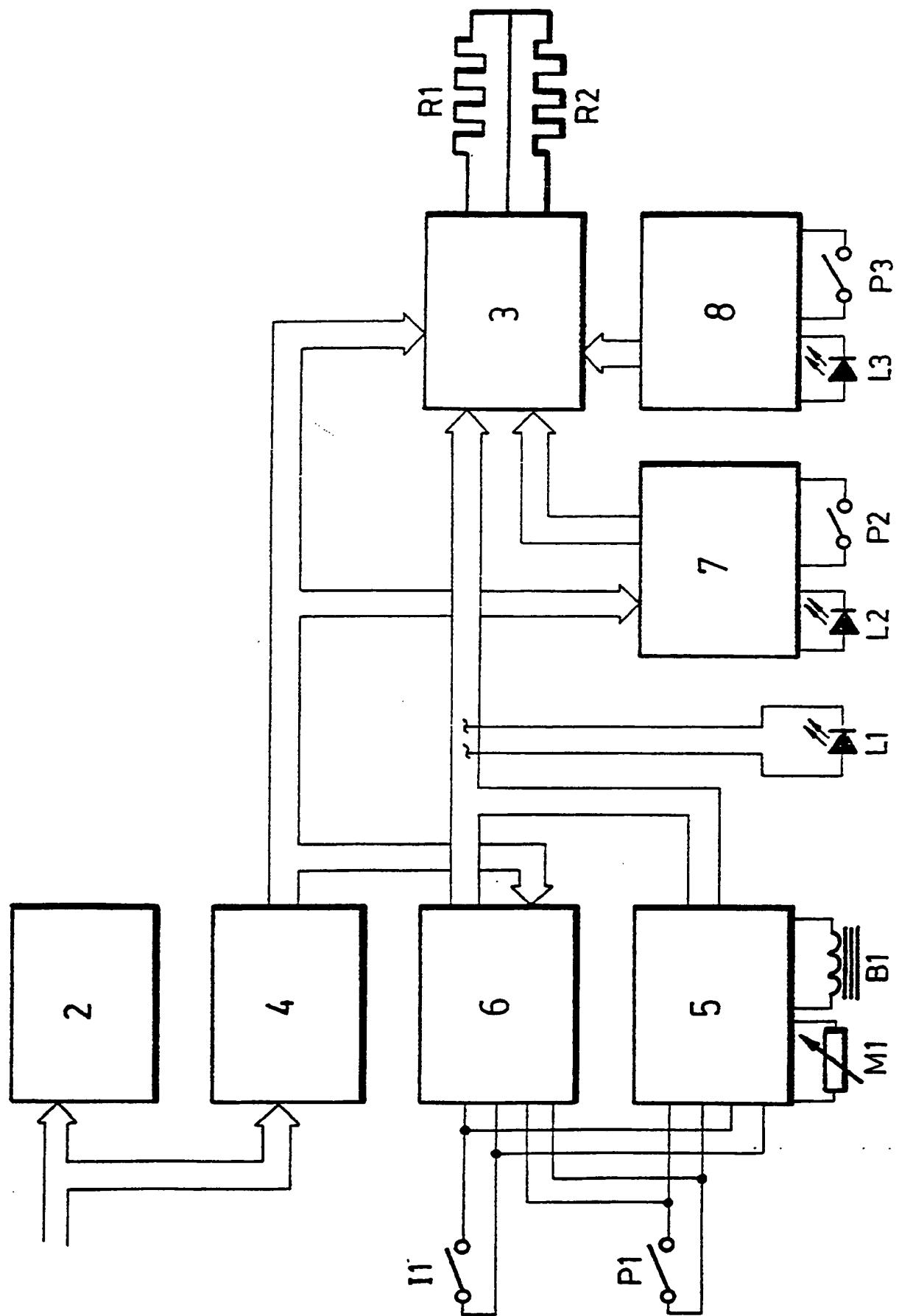
⑯ The improvements subject hereof are aimed at allowing a conventional toaster to work at will asymmetrically, at low power, or to keep a toast warm after a given toasting cycle.

To such end, operation of the toaster's heating resistors R1 and R2 is controlled by means of a power stage (3) comprising two triacs or electronic commutators, tripped at zero passage because of a zero passage detector (4) provided in the system.

The higher or lower power supplied to the resistors in the various operating modes is always carried out by means of full cycles of the system wave, either continuously in the case of top output, or by means of cycle trains, controlled by a power control (7), a one or two-side selector (8) and a heat holding timer.

For operating purposes, the system is provided with a start button I1 and an ejector and stop button P1 as well as a toaster control timer M1, indicators and actuators for the different functions.

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IMPROVEMENTS IN HOUSEHOLD TOASTERS

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to improvements in household toasters, specifically those designed to toast slices of bread, rolls sliced lengthwise or like products, using resistors between which the piece of bread to be toasted is placed as a heat source.

BACKGROUND TO THE INVENTION

Toasters are known to have a carcass provided with two resistors that can be: housed in quartz tubes, coiled in ceramic forms or wound on a mica compound, which resistors are placed next to the inner side of the carcass' larger side walls and defining a middle receptacle where the pieces of bread to be toasted are placed, delimited by a pair of grids that prevent the bread from touching the resistors, the bottom of such receptacle moreover being provided with an ejector that can be pushed down toward the bottom of the said receptacle by means of an external lever, held there and automatically released by means of a thermostat or control timer, likewise causing the bread slices to be automatically thrown out of the receptacle.

These toasters are, broadly speaking, wholly acceptable when toasting ready sliced packed bread or like products requiring the same amount of heat on both face-sides. However, they have the following disadvantages or inconveniences.

It is increasingly frequent for the conventional "toasts" to be made using bread loaves or rolls, instead of ready sliced packed bread, in other words, bread with crust on one side and obtained by slicing the bread loaf or roll in half. This means that when the half-loaf is inserted in the toaster, one of its sides exposes the crumb to one of the heat sources in such toaster while the other exposes the already baked crust which will nevertheless receive the same amount of heat, which also means that in order to toast the crumb side to the necessary extent, the crust will be over-hardened and sometimes even burnt.

This limits the use of the toasters and requires the use of grills to make toasts of this sort, which is slower and more complicated than using toasters of the aforesaid type.

Because of the power generated by toasters sold on the market and suitable for a sufficiently short space of time to be acceptable to most consumers, toasting usually results in toasts with a very thin crunchy layer and a soft and raw inside. This is not what people who like "crunchy toasts" want, in other words, toasts uniformly toasted throughout. To make this sort of toasts, the toaster output should be far less than the usual and toasting time would obviously increase.

Since time or toast control toasters are automatic appliances that are not watched over once toasting begins, it could happen that when the toast is taken out enough time has elapsed for the latter to have cooled down, after the heating resistors are automatically switched off, and it is no longer as tempting as when warm.

An attempt to solve this latter problem in a market toaster involves a system which holds the toaster ejector mechanically when the heating cycle is completed. Thus, the toast remains inside the toaster, though the heating resistors are now off, until the ejector button is pushed. This system whereby heat remaining within the toaster is used is effective to some extent but for only a very short space of time.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The improvements in household toasters subject of the invention are designed and structured for a toaster to be used, besides as a conventional toaster, as an "asymmetrical" toaster with only the one heat source located on one of the receptacle's side walls, so as to allow ordinary bread loaves and rolls sliced in half to be toasted, heating only one of the sides, in other words, the side opposite the crust to be used, at will, at reduced output, half the usual amount, to make "crunchy toasts", i.e., with the inner crumb toasted, and keep the toast warm after the toasting cycle is over for roughly at least ten minutes, or whatever shall be selected when adjusting the appliance during manufacture, with the resistors working at one-eighth or other fraction of the usual output. This takes place with the toast already "ejected", in other words, partially projecting from the top of the toaster.

In order to achieve the above performance, four different power systems are necessary:

- a). Normal power in both resistors.
- b). Normal power in only one resistor.
- c). Medium power in both resistors.
- d). One-eighth or other selected fractional power in both resistors.

When adjusting the power to these four variables several problems arise such as the resistor coils in the case of coiled resistors being self-supporting, above all if they are located inside a quartz tube and must be self-supporting, and complex commutations, which problems are overcome in this case by electronic control of the power supplied to each resistor in each of the user selected working modes.

The control system is based on pulse trains that vary in size according to the desired power and can be sent to one or both heating resistors.

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DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

In order to complement the description being made and to insist a better understanding of the characteristics of the invention, attached hereto as part of the specification is a set of drawings illustrating, albeit not restricting, the system by means of a block diagram that is moreover provided with the actuation and indicator means.

PREFERRED EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION

In the light of these figures it can be seen that the improvements in household toasters subject hereof rely on the use of an electronic circuit provided in the toaster designed for the most beneficial operation when connected to the mains (1). It is fitted with an own power supply (2) generating continuous twelve volts potential for the control circuit.

Both toasting the toast and keeping it warm takes place by means of two heating resistors R1 and R2. Power supply to the resistors is controlled by means of a pair of triacs representing the circuit's power stage (3); each triac controls a resistor. The electronic group's main function is to control the power stage (3) in order that the amount of energy reaching the resistors, depending on the selected operating mode, is sufficient; and furthermore to time the toasting and keep the heat. For suitable operation of the triacs, a zero passage (4) detector circuit is included to synchronise commutation of such triacs when the system voltage passes through zero, thereby to prevent system disturbances.

The toasting cycle starts when the toast-carrier is pushed down by hand, whereupon the starting switch I1 is automatically energised. This initializes the toasting (5) and heat-holding (6) timers. The toasting timer (5) acts on the locking coil B1, which holds the toast carrier at its lower position, and also energises the toasting or holding indicator L1, leaving it on. The duration of this stage can be programmed by the user by means of the toasting control timer M1. Once such time has elapsed, since the toast-carrier is pushed down, the latter returns to its original position when the locking coil B1 is de-energised; the indicator toasting or holding L1 indicator is also switched off.

Furthermore, it is possible to lower the heating power by pushing button P2. The latter acts upon the normal or medium power control (7) sending orders to the power stage (3) with the necessary frequency to obtain below normal operation heat dissipation at the heating resistors. By pressing P2 again, the circuit returns to normal power mode. When the toaster operates in the medium power mode, the control keeps the medium power indicator L2 on.

At this point, the stage to keep the toast's warm begins, where it is necessary for the heat dissipated at R1 and R2 to be lowered with regard to the previous

phase. To such end, the heat holding timer (6) sends signals to the power stage every now and then, so that the amount of energy transmitted to the heating resistors will be enough to keep the toasts warm without burning the same; it also deals with intermittently switching on and off the toasting or holding indicator L1. The timer (6) circuit is calculated so that this operation take place until at least ten minutes have elapsed since the toast-carrier returned to its higher position and power went from toasting to holding.

The circuit to select one or two sides (8) is energised when the user pushes button P3, inhibiting operation of the triac controlling power supply to resistor R2; thus, only one of the heating resistors begins to operate and toasting takes place only on one side and during such time indicator W stays on. By pressing P3 again, the circuit returns to the two-side toasting mode.

Finally, the toaster's circuit is provided with a stop and ejector button P1 that acts upon the toasting (5) and holding (6) timers causing the toasting and holding cycle to stop automatically and the toasts to be ejected in the event of the toast-carrier being in the lower position.

We feel that the device has now been described at sufficient length for any expert in the art to have grasped the full scope of the invention and the advantages it offers.

The materials, shape, size and layout of the elements may be altered provided that this entails no modification of the essential features of the invention.

The terms used to describe the invention herein should be taken to have a broad rather than a restrictive meaning.

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Claims

1. - Improvements in household toasters, aimed at allowing a conventional toaster to work asymmetrically at will, at a low power or keeping a toast warm after a given toasting cycle, essentially characterised in that they rely on an electronic power control comprising a power stage (3) fitted with two triacs or electronic commutators that control the power supplied to two heating resistors R1 and R2, with the assistance of a zero passage detector (4), a toasting timer (5) and a heat-holding the timer (6), besides a normal or medium power control (7), and a one or two-side selector (8), a start button I1 and an ejector and stop button P1 being provided, together with a power supply (2) to supply the requisite continuous voltage to the control elements.

2. - Improvements in household toasters, according to claim 1, characterised in that power control by means of the normal or medium power control (7) in the toasting or holding stages, takes place by full cycles of the system wave, either continuously in the

top output system, or by means of wave trains in the other cases, trip being ensured at zero in the system wave by means of the zero passage detector (4).

3. - Improvements in household toasters, according to previous claims, characterised in that the toasting timer (5) is associated to a toasting control timer M1 and a locking coil B1, the normal or medium power control (7) is associated to an average power button P2 and an average power indicator L2 and the one or two-side selector (8) is associated to a one-side selector button P3 and a one-side indicator L3, a toasting or holding indicator L1 also being provided.

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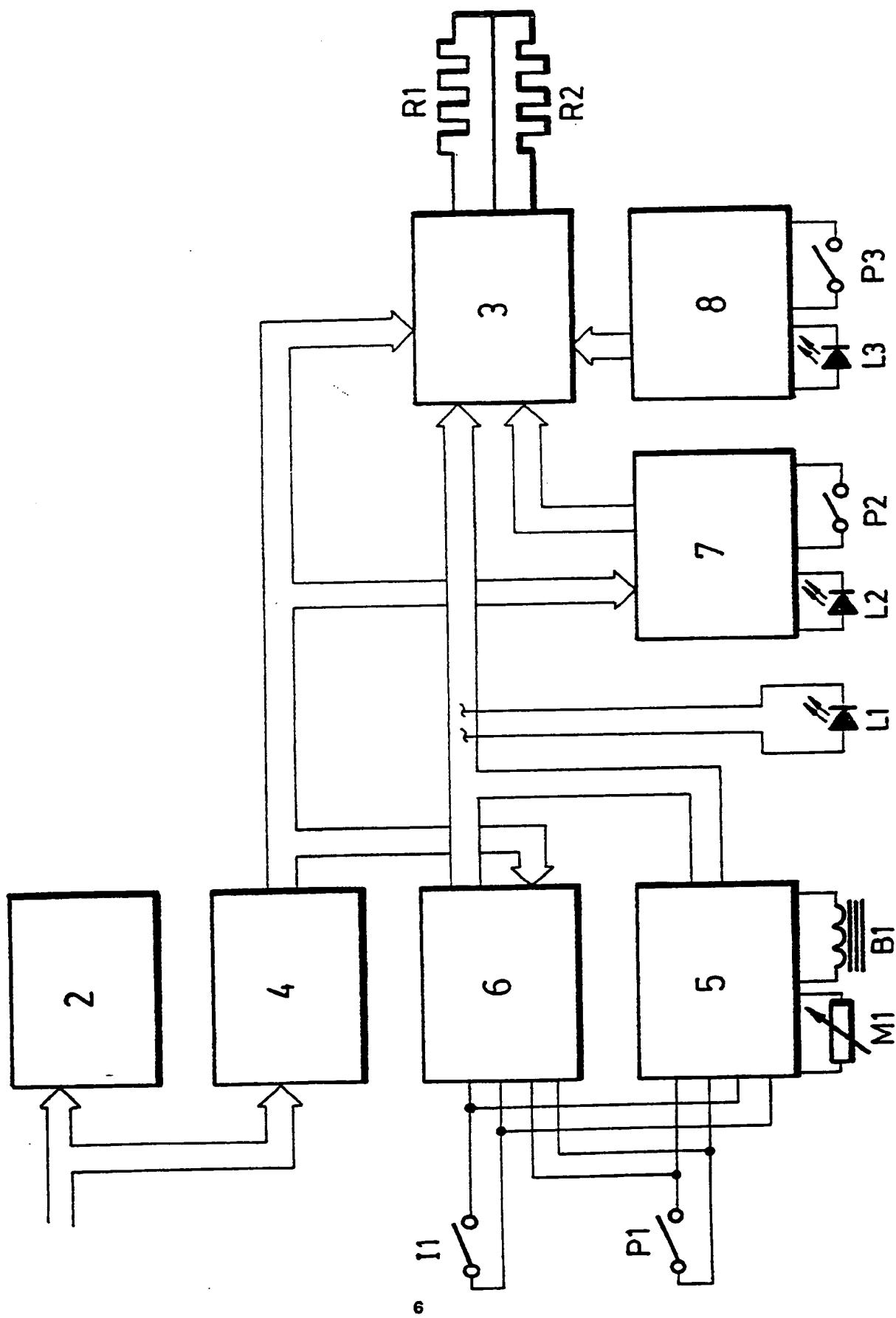
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EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number

EP 91 50 0001

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl.5)
A	FR-A-2 632 510 (OFICINA DE INVESTIGACION AGRUPADA) * page 7, line 21 - page 9, line 5; figures 2,4 * -----	1,3	A47J37/08
A	GB-A-1 583 370 (CORECI) * page 1, line 10 - line 63 * -----	1,2	
A	ELECTRONIQUE APPLICATIONS. vol. DEC, no. 33, December 1983, PARIS FR pages 49 - 50; SIEMENS: 'CIRCUIT TEMPORISATEUR NUMERIQUE PROGRAMMABLE' * page 50, line 10 - line 61; figures 2,3 * -----	1	
A	DE-A-2 950 229 (BOSCH-SIEMENS HAUSGERATE GMBH) * page 3, line 19 - page 6, line 9; figures * -----	1,3	
A	US-A-3 585 363 (PRICE) * column 3, line 9 - line 18; figure 5 * -----	1,3	
TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl.5)			
A47J			
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search	Date of completion of the search		Examiner
THE HAGUE	15 MAY 1991		BODART P.
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	